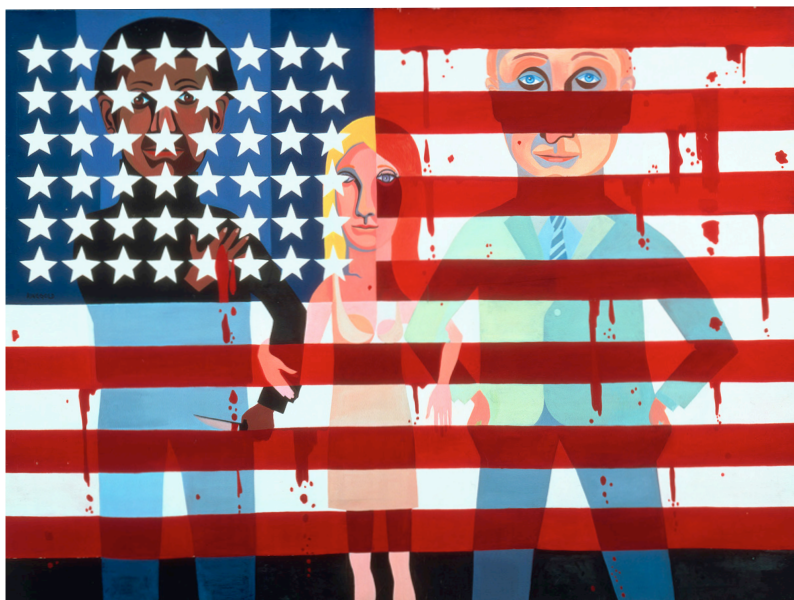


The Last Hoisan Poets & Friends
AMERICAN PEOPLE
Celebrating FAITH RINGGOLD



Saturday, November 19, 2022, 1pm to 2pm
Koret Auditorium, de Young Museum
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

de Young \
museum



Faith Ringgold: American People

Bringing together fifty years of work, this is the most comprehensive exhibition to date of Faith Ringgold's groundbreaking vision.

Featuring works from across Ringgold's best-known series, this show tracks the development of her figurative style as it evolved to meet the urgency of political and social change. Throughout her career, Ringgold has drawn from personal and collective histories to both document her life and amplify the struggles for justice and equity.

From creating some of the most indelible artworks of the civil rights era to challenging accepted hierarchies of art versus craft through her experimental story quilts, Ringgold has produced a body of work that bears witness to the complexity of the American experience.

Long overdue, this retrospective provides a timely opportunity to engage with the art of an American icon.

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/exhibitions/Faith-Ringgold-American-People>

de Young \
museum

AMERICAN PEOPLE

THE LAST HOISAN POETS: Celebrating FAITH RINGGOLD

Saturday, November 19, 2022, 1pm to 2pm
Koret Auditorium, de Young Museum

WELCOME

Calling the Ancestors Destiny Muhammad

Introductions/Land Acknowledgment

SISTERS & STORIES

Goo (Stories) by Nellie Wong

Quickly Painting Quilting Sowing by Flo Oy Wong

Tar Dreams (for Faith Ringgold) by Genny Lim

Walking on Water by Destiny Muhammad

WOMEN'S WORK

Ironing, Ironing (for Tillie Olsen) by Nellie Wong

Dead Girl Lament by Genny Lim

Amazing Grace by Flo Oy Wong

Plain English by Nellie Wong

AMERICAN PEOPLE

The Bridge For Sonny Rollins (Sept. 7, 1930-) by Genny Lim

Reading by Guest Poet Tshaka Campbell

Reading by Guest Poet Tongo Eisen-Martin

ANYONE CAN FLY

Kuey Joong Yi Hoong Sic / She Loves Red by Flo Oy Wong

Instrumental Rhythm by Nellie Wong

Flying High For Ella Fitzgerald (April 25, 1917-June 15, 1996) by Genny Lim

Here by Destiny Muhammad

Hoisan-wa for Faith Ringgold by The Last Hoisan Poets

The artists would like to express their deepest gratitude to Faith Ringgold and Grace Matthews; the de Young Museum staff; Cheryl Ball & Alisa Nascimento at San Francisco Center for the Book, the teachers and students at Sunnyside Elementary School. Special thanks to Brad Wong, Wyland Chu, Patrick Dare, Karen Huie, Linda Huang, Elizabeth Wong, Young Wong & Victor Yan.

Production Team: Andi Wong, *Project Coordinator*. Christopher Wong, *Videographer*

**“I have always wanted to tell my story -
or, more to the point, my side of the story.”**

— FAITH RINGGOLD

Goo (Stories)

<i>Cheng goo</i>	Sing stories
<i>Gong goo</i>	Tell stories
<i>Thleh goo</i>	Write stories
<i>Wock goo</i>	Draw stories
<i>Tun sai gai na goo</i>	The whole world's stories

Nellie Wong

© 2022 Nellie Wong



Faith Ringgold
*Feminist Series #6: There Was One
of Two Things*, 1972.

Cover: Faith Ringgold, *Early Works*
#25: *Self-Portrait*, 1965.

Quickly Painting Quilting Sowing

Abuzz with colors/paints. she creates
Breathtaking lines contouring
Calamity of justice
Daring to make BLACK people
Enter their presence everywhere
Fabulous BLACKS in all walks of life
Grown from slavery many moons ago
Idiom of BLACK art soured, sorrowed
Jazzy complete with cacophonous
Keyboard of musical melodic sounds
Lyrics that release palpable pain
Males, females empty of life's fairness
No resistance could make her
Overtly
Passive.
Quickly painting quilting sowing
Restorative peace her PEOPLE need
Simply standing up to call for dignity
Tomorrow tomorrow tomorrow today
Under a fair and equal platform to create
Viable ways of living
Wise artist of over five decades
Xamples of inequity she highlights
Zigzagging world she sows THEN and NOW

Flo Oy Wong

© 2022 Flo Oy Wong

THE BANDUNG SPIRIT

By GENNY LIM

The history of Asian-African unity has been a hallmark of our shared community struggles in the U.S. On the geo-political level, this unity was formally established at the [Bandung Conference](#), held in Bogor, Indonesia, April 18-24, 1955. Twenty-nine nations, among them, China, Japan, India, Philippines, Vietnam, Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, Vietnam and others, adopted the Declaration on Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation, which planted the seed for peoples living under colonial domination to achieve national liberation and independence through self-determination and collective resistance. The Indonesian President Sukarno, addressed the participating nations with the question, "Let a New Asia and a New Africa Be Born?"

San Francisco's [Western Addition](#) was home to half the city's African American population during the 1930's. Japanese Americans settled alongside their Black neighbors there in the forties, until they were displaced and sent to the camps during World War II. Japantown, once home to over 5,000 Japanese Americans with bustling family-owned business, churches and schools, became a ghost of itself. Both communities, which had co-existed peacefully in harmony, were furthered threatened when the district was split in two with the construction of Geary Boulevard to create a main artery through the middle of the city. Since that time, the Asian and African American communities have dispersed with redevelopment changing the face of the city and its history of racial harmony alongside it as well.

It is time to re-envision the Bandung legacy of Asia-Africa unity in light of the breakdown of understanding and trust both of our communities are experiencing following the Covid crisis and pandemic, which gave rise to a surge in hate speech and anti-Asian violence. As artists and poets, our role as cultural workers is to give voice to the voiceless, and to shed light on violence, racism and social injustice is a moral responsibility as much as a right.

Faith Ringold's work incorporates a wide range of multicultural influences, which includes her adaptation of framing paintings in the tradition of [Tibetan cloth tangkas](#) and her incorporation of Japanese kanji style calligraphy in many of her works. Her intuitive assimilation of African, Asian and European art forms cohered in a unique expression that was all her own.

Our work seeks to rekindle and revitalize the connection between our two communities in an effort to heal the gulf of misunderstanding and mistrust that have given rise to acts of violence targeting our elders and vulnerable citizens, as well as the extrajudicial acts of police violence perpetrated on our fellow African American brothers and sisters.

It is time to let a new Asian and African American unity be born!

TAR DREAMS (for Faith Ringgold)

If young girls never died, there would be no need to brew beer.

-The Sixth Dalai Lama, The Turquoise Bee

A thousand mourners in black ash ask
Where do we go?
To the tomb of the unknown soldier
Laid-to-rest on a horse-drawn caisson
A hundred years ago?
Our Country Tis for Whom?
For the quilted shrouds of fettered dreams
Stitched by Black women's hands at Gee's Bend
Or Black hands toiling in cotton fields
Like fantom hands chopped from the
White sap of the *Landolphia Owariensis*
By the Rubber Butcher Leopold
Or the yellow hands frozen in pick-axes
Carving granite through the Sierras
To lay tracks for the Central Pacific
Our country tis of bent and broken backs
Sung in minor key to *Go Down Moses*
In a crossfire of bullets and burning crosses
To sing sorrow songs
A Closer Walk with Thee
For the dearly dead and departed
Our country tis of broken promises
Homeless tents and bone-dry rivers
Fields of corn, wheat, tomatoes
Withered on the vine
Under the crucible sun
A sacrifice of five generations
To feed Klandestine desires
Undercover of White Hoods
To wet nurse an empire
To launder history
To midwife miscegeny
And lay waste the green
Heart of Africa for black gold

Our country tis a bird without wings!
A legacy of broken bloodlines, fake boundaries
An eagle circling the dollar
Stars and stripes hanging at
Half-staff more days than most
Red, white and blue in pious anthem
Skin against skin, father against son

American People, repeat after me
We are better than this
We are better than this
Before the blues, before Jim Crow
When children were children
Before the blues, before Columbus
When mothers nursed their babes
With the milk of freedom

We are better than this
Let the children be children again
Let them fly over ice cream factories
Let them listen to the call of the wind!
Let two strangers imbibe moonlight
Let grave diggers become poets
And poets become gravediggers
Who excavate truth from lies
Who proclaim A Love Supreme
Because Love, O' giver and creator of life
Is the gospel that liberates hate
Is the power that melts pain and sorrow
May love rise from the graveyard of history
From the back lots, sink holes, rails
And tenement roofs of Tar Beach USA
From the ark of God's back
In the umbilical cord of memory
Ripped from Kali's womb
The sacred feminine of life much
Greater than man-made empires
What is life, but a bubble blown
By one's own breath?
With a winged brush of
Blood, sweat, fiber, bone, wood
Oil, basket, Kinte cloth, quilt
Mask, steel, sex, root of mandrake
Juju, flag, caul, earth and water
Wind and fire, song, dance and ritual
Faith, Black messenger of truth
Sets sail on her painted ferry
To stir the waters
And peel back the white wave
To open our eyes
And say, We are better than this



Faith Ringgold
*'American People Series #15:
Hide Little Children, 1966.*

*My Country 'Tis of Thee
Sweet land of liberty of Thee I Sing!*

Genny Lim
© 2022 Genny Lim

Ironing, Ironing (For Tillie Olsen)

Like a drunken fool I pick out the wrinkled linen and shirt,
the foam-green dress, the black, long sleeve T
and I drink ice cold glasses of lemon tea
as the temperature lingers at 90 plus degrees.
When I ironed as a 12-year old, I listened
to the radio. Imogene Coca and Sid Caesar battled
in their boisterous humor, the Lone Ranger
and his faithful companion, Tonto,
rode in clouds of dust,
but I liked his real name better,
Jay Silverheels. "The Inner Sanctum,"
"The Whistler," and Jack Benny
with his arms akimbo,
and his sidekick Rochester.

I can see Tallulah Bankhead,
her heavily mascaraed eyes.
I hear her deep-throated voice
and smell her cigarette breath.

OF FAITH, FURY & FEMINISM by NELLIE WONG

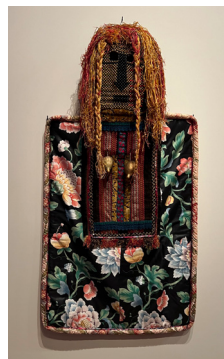
I promise myself a *cha siu bao*,
relishing succulent red pork, half
fat, half lean. After a light rain with
Daylight Saving Time coming to
a halt tonight, I think about Faith
Ringgold, her life and her art. I
cherish meeting Faith, in October,
dressed in red, from head to toe,
breath-taking in sparkling glasses,
her eyes full of wonder and light. This
is real time, this is Faith, a radical
human, an artistic soul. Eating lunch
together. Faith, her daughter Barbara;
my sister Flo, her daughter Felicia,
her dear artist friend Grace, and me
in her home in New Jersey. Cassie
Louise Lightfoot, a five-foot-tall doll,
provides sweet company.

Faith Ringgold's art, her story quilts,

paintings and writings breathe. And
breathe. She utilizes wishes, dreams
and fantasies, and, yes, experience,
speaking truths, busting lies, exposing
oppression of racial bigotry, sexual
discrimination, economic inequality.
Black, brown, yellow, white, no worker,
no woman immune to the violence of
hunger, isolation, slavery, separation,
stolen labor, erasure, imprisonment.

In *Tar Beach*, Cassie Louise Lightfoot
flies to gift a building to her father,
deemed colored, a half-breed Indian.
Faith doesn't say, in this honored
children's book, who's saying that her
dad is colored, a half breed Indian. This
reader knows. Anti-Black racism sings
through the author's exposition; Cassie's
bridge-worker Daddy couldn't join the

These radio characters were good company
 as I ironed and ironed my father's pants,
 my mother's dresses, my sister's blouses
 and my own pajama tops and bottoms
 that Ma Ma sewed just for me.
 No, these were not PJ's for sleeping.
 I felt ashamed because I was a girl
 and had to wear pants which were not in style.
 I wanted to wear flower-print dresses
 with crisp, peter-pan collars
 like my sisters and girlfriends,
 but couldn't because my eczema
 had a field day with ripe, red hives
 blossoming onto my skin, conquering
 the body that I thought I owned.



Faith Ringgold
*Women's Liberation
 Talking Mask, 1973*

When I was young, I thought that ironing
 was drudgery, only the work
 that poor Chinese or black girls did,
 not for pin money, but for money, period.

union because her Grandpa wasn't a
 union member. Not by choice, but by
 exclusion of workers of dark skin.

In *We Came to America*, people are
 of every color, race and religion. In a
 poster, "*Power to the People*," (1970),
 Faith advocates for the Black Panther
 Party and the freeing of political
 prisoners. In a stunning story quilt,
 "*The Sunflower Quilting Bee of Arles*,"
 the artist depicts Madam C.J. Walker,
 Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Fannie
 Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Rosa
 Parks, Mary McLeod Bethune, and
 Ella Baker. The image of famed
 painter of sunflowers, Vincent Van
 Gogh, stands at their side. I will never
 look at a sunflower again without
 thinking of Faith's quilted beauty of
 Black female warriors. Sunflowers all.

In Faith's *Slave Rape #3: Fight to Save
 Your Life*, 1972, the image of a woman
 of Africa with axe in hand, speaks to
 the fury and fire of the movement for
 women's liberation. When women
 are not free, anywhere in the world,
 no one is free. Here, in the U.S.,
 the decimation of Roe v. Wade by
 the Supreme Court, is galvanizing
 feminists, women and men, to save
 our own lives. To access free, legal
 abortion and determine our own
 bodily autonomy.

The works and activism of this
 phenomenal woman are with us. For
 her daughters and granddaughters.
 For all the people. In my search for
 heroes, Faith Ringgold shines. She
 is Black light, the quintessential
 freedom fighter. Home grown.

When I ironed at midnight, *Bah Bah* fried
his golden pork chops in a cast-iron pan
and drank his V.O. in our kitchen.
He already worked a long day and evening
at our Great China Restaurant.
And we became companions,
father and daughter, staples in the kitchen,
using our hands to cook and iron,
silent with our unexpressed dreams.

"Marriage, hmphh!" blurted *Bah Bah* one night
and I said nothing. I only ironed and ironed,
thinking the hissing of the steam iron
was noisy enough for both of us.

Now I practically dance as iron
because I've had so much practice.
Retrieving from my woven Japanese basket
the postcard reproduction of a painting
called "Ironing" by Jacob Lawrence
who now resides with the world's dead painters.
In the painting, three Black women, tall and angular,
in white cotton cloche hats and sleeveless white dresses,
hunker down with heavy black irons.
They had no steam irons, just their muscles
and grit finishing up some mistresses'
blouses, aprons and tablecloths.

They dig and lift, push and slide and lift again,
their thoughts submerged into the irons
as their fingers maneuver on the ironing boards
as expertly as ice skaters on a rink.
These ironers (this word has dignity)
ironed on hot nights, cold mornings, doing the work
their white employers paid them little to do.

Jacob Lawrence didn't paint the ironers' eyes,
their noses, their mouths. I don't know
if they were smiling or gossiping, if they were worried
about the day's meager wages, if there was
enough milk or cereal for their children.
Technology cannot give us digital ironing.
Who'd want it? You mean flicking a switch,
pointing the arrow at an icon
and your ironing's done? Astronauts swallowing
pills for honey-baked ham and chocolate éclairs?



Mother's Quilt, 1983 by Faith Ringgold

Ironing is honest work, ironing is what
Ma Ma's brother-in-law from China did,
a handsome laundry man we addressed as *Ah Chenk*
with his own laundry
at the mouth of Stockton St. Tunnel
entering Chinatown. Here, Chinese men ironed
and pressed white linens, men's dress shirts,
women's dresses, even rich folks' underwear.
I probably will never stop ironing
even though it's smart to look wrinkled
these days. Savoring the rhythm, the honesty,
on this, the hottest night of the year,
I stand here, ironing, ironing.

Nellie Wong

© 2002 Nellie Wong

Published in *Breakfast Lunch Dinner*, Meridien PressWorks, © 2012

Dead Girl Lament

Thlay nuey-bow!
Dead Girl Bag
Bag of Dead Girl
Yit-ga doy jet sip-ga nuey!
One boy is worth ten Girls
Thlow-ah nay huey!
Thlow-ah nay huey!
Sweep you away! Sweep you away!
Thlay nuey-bow! Thlay hie!
Yeung-ah-nay aye! Haw mawt neh?
Raise you till grown, for what?
Words, words, that ring in my ears
Summer, Winter, Fall. . .
Gneet-gneet! Gneet-gneet! Ten-zai!
Every day, every night, all the time!
These are the words that
Repeat in a shame song
Words I struggle to not live by
Words trapped in the
Dead Zone of non-being
When I dance in sunlight
Above the cracked asphalt
Arms outstretched like Monarch's
wings
I'm alive for just a moment or two
I'm free in the refuge of dreams lost
Out of time, I want more than
The dying shadow of that small
house
In that crawl space called life
Squeezed between hanging fuschia
And flapping village tongues
Some immigrants climb
The rung ahead of us
Keep their distance from us
Even though we live next door
We are invisible
Neither seen nor heard
Never to be or not to be
I walk the line between
Hyphen and zero
Dream and Bardo

Sleepwalk and sleep
Waiting, hoping for
The possible, not improbable
Shortchanged at birth
Last of seven
I hate math because
I don't count
Never to be lady on the moon
President of the United States
Girls are bottom-feeders in
A pond of Diamond backs
Chew-yeung nuey, leung nuey
Ugly girl, beautiful girl
Alla-same
Dream, daydream, reality
Growing up in North Beach
Chinatown
Between Buddha and Jesus
Kwan-Kung and Super Man
Su-puk-getti and cho-men
Fon-guey and hong-gneen
Lonely Bachelors watching us
Run up and down the slide at
Portsmouth Square playground
Behind *Gim San Si-Bow* job
listings
For hotel janitors and chop
house cooks
Dirty Dutch exposing himself in
Woolworth aisles and cable cars
You learn to hold your breath
Swallow your tongue in that
Airless bag for dead girls
Gneet-gneet! Gneet-gneet!
Ten-zai!
Thlay nuey bow! Thlay hie!
Who refuse to sleep
Who refuse to die
Even without light

Genny Lim

© 2022 Genny Lim



Detail from *The French Collection Part 1, -12-Moroccan Holiday*, 1997 by Faith Ringgold

Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace
 Because you love and
 Care for Faith, 28 years ago, you
 Decide to become her assistant.
 Enlightened by a performance class she taught, you became
 Friends, accepting sisterhood, answering her need for help, you
 Generously offer your photography skills, which your parents supported,
 Humbly taking photos to meet her needs, you then start doing
 Independent projects under her tutelage.
 Jazzed by your mutual friendship her
 Kindness grows as does yours. You then enter deeper into a
 Labyrinth of her art, your art, you explore
 Meaningful ways to create work that speaks loudly, your fingers
 Nimble quilting fabric after Faith painted her foundation layer,
 Overtly tackling issues of invisibility, inequity, unfairness,
 Painful consequences of America's
 Quandary of slavery, history of shame
 Realistically working many hours, you two
 Steadfastly produce works to exhibit in galleries/ museums
 To tell the truth, the gospel of American candor,
 Understood by some and misunderstood by others,
 Values of fairness juggernaut-ed by those in power. Faith the
 Wonder Woman of Harlem, resister for fifty years,
 Excitingly created products by painting, sculpting, writing.
 You, Amazing Grace, are still by her side, quilting, caring, organizing, both
 of you still
 Zesting for equitable American life.

In 1982, Heresies, the classic feminist art magazine from the 1970s through the 1990s, published Faith Ringgold's essay "I Love My Mother," with editorial remarks by her daughter Michelle Wallace, in [Heresies 14: The Women's Pages Vol. 4, No. 2 1982](#). Nellie Wong's poem, "Plain English" was published in [Heresies 15: Racism is the Issue \(1982\)](#).

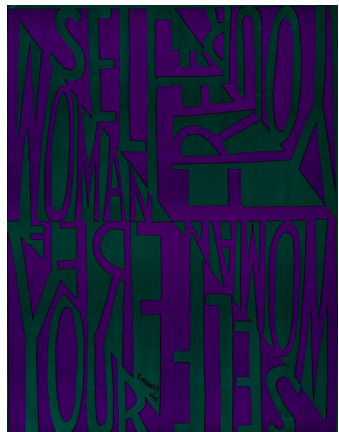
Plain English (excerpt)

Plain English is not the flatlands, not doughnuts
with holes intact. When we speak plainly in poetry
it is not to say we deflower the English language,
its richness, its golden light.

When an Asian-American speaks
when a Black American speaks
when a Native American speaks
when a Latin American speaks
he sings, she sings the language
of cultures, of songs and festivals
and bells and rhythms and dialects
of ancestors long buried but alive.

Why a poem, why not an essay?
Ah, but you see, we write poems in our essays
and essays in our poems.
We do not confuse the form from the content.
We fuse them, see threads of silk and cord intertwine.
We make love in the heart of sense
in the abdomen of pain and struggle
in the eyes that see clarity
in the roar and dancing of lions...

Faith Ringgold
"Woman Free Yourself," 1971



Plain English is not the flatlands, not the void
of human existence. Plain English is a love
we feel for ourselves, our sisters and brothers.
It is what we learn now to unlearn
the self-hatred of the colors of our skins,
our women's bodies, our brains, our hands,
boxing shadows into the light
to talk to you with our whole selves
our lives hanging there on the laundry lines,
blowing in the winds in all colors that fly
in this land we call *Gum Sahn*, Gold Mountain,
America.

If we see colors other than red, white and blue
do not accuse us of being unpatriotic
do not say we came to America to steal its gold
do not say we do not belong
for our generations prove you wrong
for our history in slavery, exclusion, incarceration.

We sing in plain English
to understand the richness of our struggles
not to blend in a melting pot
but to see the dignity and elegance
of our people
who seek to rise
and feel the sun on their backs, their faces
to seek our rights to speak out
and not to be silenced by a gun,
by censorship, by ignorance.

Physical death is no monster.
Cultural genocide snakes around our necks
and until we loosen free
until you hear us
as we've heard you
until you see our backs break
we will sing in plain English
flowering from our own tongues.

Nellie Wong

© 1982 Nellie Wong



Faith Ringgold, *Sonny's Bridge*, 1986

The Bridge For Sonny Rollins (Sept. 7, 1930-)

Jazz transcends life and death as we know it on this planet.

— Sonny Rollins

At five in the afternoon
Crowds' bust their asses
To beat grid-lock like ants
Swerving in and out of sidewalk
Cracks to reach their colony
Death gives death no quarter
To the city of gains and losses
A pent-up Babylon of broken
Homes and pirated dreams
A city in the throes of dying
Desperate souls in need of dope
Something calls him to the Bridge to
Something missing in the waters below
His own voice is calling him home
Deep and wide as the sea
Rising from the depths of his being
Resounding in Freedom Suite
In bopping, 6-6-8-6, St. Thomas
Perfection is epiphany
But love is sublime

Genny Lim

© 2021 Genny Lim

Reading by Guest Poet

TSHAKA CAMPBELL

Poet Laureate of Santa Clara County



Black Light Series #5: Black Art Poster, 1969 by Faith Ringgold

Reading by Guest Poet

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN

Poet Laureate of San Francisco

FAITH RINGGOLD: A RICH FRIENDSHIP

By FLO OY WONG

In the early 1990s, after I had co-founded the Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA) in the East Bay, I attended a National Women's Caucus for Art (NWCA) art conference on the East Coast. At this conference, my first experience at venturing beyond the San Francisco/East Bay Area art environment, I saw her. Faith Ringgold. Artist of renown. I stopped. I stared. A genuine American art icon, sitting not far from me. She was with a group of younger women artists of color. She was regal in her appearance and the younger artists listened to what she was saying. Watching the interchange, I wanted to introduce myself.

Days later at the Berkeley home of the late Moira Roth, feminist art historian, art critic, and Trefethen Professor of Art History at Mills College, I told her about seeing Faith.

"Did you introduce yourself?" Moira asked. I shook my head.

"She's very special," Moira iterated.

A newcomer to the contemporary women's art world, I knew little about reaching out to luminary women artists such as Faith.

Some time later, I visited Moira again. "I have told Faith about you," she said. "About your [*Baby Jack Rice Story*](#) that tells Ed's (my husband) childhood story of growing up in Augusta, Georgia during segregation. About how Ed's mother allowed him to play with his Black friends, Boykin and Cush Cade. About how you were inspired by her story quilts, about how you stitched words about Ed's childhood story on rice sacks. Faith likes Ed's story and how you made the artwork, inspired by her story quilts."

Moira invited me to meet Faith when she came for a later visit to Oakland, home of Mills College. That introduction was the beginning of a rich friendship with Faith. At another art conference in New York, she had invited women artists to make art at her Harlem apartment. That afternoon, my heart beating fast, I found my way to Harlem, checking the address to make sure I had arrived at the right place. The doorman told me what floor Faith's apartment was located on. I rang the doorbell and entered her home that was more like a buzzing art studio. Nervous and excited, I found a place and started making marks on paper. Looking at what others were creating, my courage disappeared.

“Faith,” I said. “I’m leaving. I don’t like what I am doing.”

“Sit down,” she said in a commanding voice. “You will finish it. I will stay with you.” I gulped and sat at the table, recognizing the voice of authority.

The afternoon darkened. I kept drawing. She chatted, about being Black in America, about learning about fabric from her mother. Becoming more relaxed, I told her about growing up in Oakland Chinatown. She said that she loved Sundays because her parents would go to the movie and she would stay home with her siblings. After the movie, her parents stopped at the Chinese take-out, bringing home their favorite dishes. Our conversation took on a trusting tone. We talked about our views of men, about our husbands, who supported our drive to make art.

Faith introduced my work to Grace Yun, a professor in the history department of University of Connecticut, and to Eleanor Flomenhaft, Chelsea gallerist, who then included my work, which was inspired by Faith, in a national traveling show. When the exhibition ended Eleanor then represented my art in her Chelsea gallery.

Several years ago, in my Sunnyvale, California home, I hosted a dinner in honor of Faith who had come to California to give a keynote address for an arts organization in nearby Menlo Park. I cooked food that she liked. Platters of healthy dishes sat on the counter. During dinner, she sat in a rattan chair (now known as the Faith Chair). Faith was as vivacious as the clothing she wore, sparkly sequins, chunky jewelry, cowboy boots. The guests gathered around, including Black artists from Oakland who idolized her. When the party ended, Faith stayed in her chair. She wanted to be the last one to leave.



Faith & Flo, 2022. Photo by Felicia Wong

This October, I visited Faith in her Englewood, New Jersey home. I had visited once before when her husband, Burdette, was still living. On this trip, a gathering graciously organized by Grace Matthews, her assistant who had met Faith at the University of California, San Diego 28 years ago. This time, my daughter Felicia and my sister Nellie accompanied me. In front of Faith’s house, two *Tar Beach* mosaics

welcomed us. Inside, her home was filled with paintings, quilts, and other art treasures. Faith and I embraced. I knew that I was in the right place with a dear friend and inspirational Black woman artist known worldwide.

Kuey Joong Yi Hoong Sic / She Loves Red

In "good luck red" she ambles
into the sun room, wearing
a red hat, dangling loop earrings
with red, blue, and white beads.
She wears oversized dark glasses
with sequins framing the frame.
Red gloss on her lips matches
a red sweater with silver threads.
A jazzy presence.
Wearing black pants to complete
her outfit, she settles comfortably
in a high back chair.

*Kuey joong yi hoong sic.
She loves red.*

A brownish braid cascades past
her left ear, resting way below
her shoulder.
On her feet, she dons sneakers
with a repeated pattern of red
and white.
She resembles a subject who
might have posed for one
of her own paintings completed
over fifty years of art-making.
A goddess of the contemporary art world,
she is dressed in the American scarlet
of her transparent heart
and the hearts of her American People,
who are painted on detailed canvasses.

*Kuey joong yi hoong sic.
She loves red.*

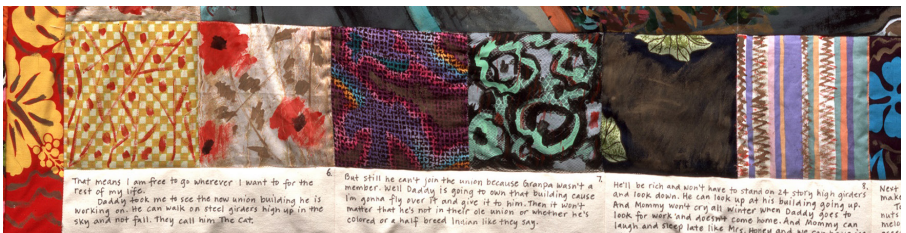
I embrace her.
She returns my hug.
Toasty warmth.
Introductions to my sister and daughter
are exchanged.
Our conversation flows in a river
of long-lasting friendship.
I speak,
"We have translated your name
into Hoisan-wa, our ancestral dialect."
I catch my breath and continue,

*"Thlin Sim Ling Gim.
Believe in Heart, Make Gold."*

Listening intently, her eyes grow.
Her name? In a Chinese dialect?
"Tar Beach," her children's book,
had been translated recently
for the Chinese language market,
usually read as Mandarin.
Young children in China
now meet precocious
Cassie Louise Lightfoot who dares
to fly above the Harlem sky.

*Kuey joong yi hoong sic.
She loves red.*

Details from "Woman on a Bridge" Tar Beach, 1988



Synergy swirls, like fall's falling leaves.
 Our lotus voices inch towards
 illuminating sun.
 Joy is present.
 We give presents.
 My sister, a poet of renown offers
 a poem about her Chinese name,
 reading it with élan.
 I gift a turquoise beret because
 she likes hats.
 My second gift, a stone with "Hope" engraved.
 She feels its soothing surface.
 My daughter hands her a container
 of fresh brown butter shortbread cookies.
 Sugar crystals coat her lips.

Kuey joong yi hong sic.
She loves red.

Her loyal assistant of twenty eight years
 is present.
 Their devotion to one another
 is quilted with unbreakable threads.
 Soon, her second-born daughter
 joins us for a light lunch.
 Fish chowder, salad, poached pears,
 vegan ice cream.
 We sit at the round table eating
 the delectable meal.
 Her first-born daughter arrives
 as our visit draws to an end.
 She honors her mother's ninety second birthday
 with a shiny red rain slicker and a fuzzy fall cloak.
 Snapping photos of a memorable day
 with our American artist, we prepare to leave.
 She, the legendary *American People* artist,
 is forever an American beacon.

Thlin Sim Ling Gim joong yi hong sic.
Faith loves red.

Flo Oy Wong
 © 2022 Flo Oy Wong



13th/century to 19th century
 14th/century to 19th century
 15th/century to 19th century
 16th/century to 19th century
 17th/century to 19th century
 18th/century to 19th century
 19th/century to 19th century

Instrumental Rhythm

Cooking sweet and sour rock cod.
playing cool jazz, yeah!
Whether tenor saxophone or trumpet
pat the fish dry, sprinkle salt and pepper
and the notes fly, syncopate,
Pour oil into the wok, get it sizzling.
Place the whole cod into the concave body
of the wok and let it fry.
Messengers of jazz at Birdland.

Wedged tomatoes, sliced yellow onions
and green bell peppers collide in unison,
chamber music in wrought iron.
Pour white vinegar, almost half a cup.
Mix with granulated sugar.
Dizzy Gillespie and Machito
embrace in a blow of horn and samba.
dribble cornstarch paste like light rain,
thicken the ensemble, crown
the entire body with bubbling sauce.

Off with the apron! Pour Pinot Grigio!
Clash the cymbals, serve the fish
on an ice-blue platter.
Scoop steamed long-grain rice
into celadon green bowls.
Sit down, let chopsticks do the dance,
a finale
that rocks, that never ends.

Nellie Wong

Published in *Breakfast Lunch Dinner*, Meridien PressWorks, © 2012



Detail from *Tar Beach*, "I could see our tiny roof," 1991, by Faith Ringgold



Detail from *Tar Beach*, "I'll take Be Be with me," 1991 by Faith Ringgold

Flying High **For Ella Fitzgerald** **(April 25, 1917-June 15, 1996)**

Those of us with no tickets gotta
Get there fast as our feet can
carry us
Gotta hurry and get there before
she starts!
Already there's a crowd hunkered
Three-deep at the perimeter of
the wall
Every inch of grass is occupied
As if the Second Coming!
We squeeze in, crowding,
crouching
Angling for a spot, even climbing
Onto overhanging tree branches to
Cock our ears against the five
o'clock
Shadow of an oak to hear what
would
Be the sound of honey if bees
could
Make sweetness heard
We drop our heads, close our eyes
And let nightfall still our breaths
The clarity and silken purity of her
Voice wraps us in its golden halo
It's a voice like no other, that only
Comes once upon a time a
lifetime to
Grace the earth, like a rare
Stradivarius
Whose exquisite tone makes
leaves tremble

First Lady of Song,
Queen of Jazz plays Central Park!
Nothing but blue skies smiling
Nothing but blue skies from now on
Ella blowing her God-given horn
To soothe the savage beasts of night
Ella, who broke ground on amateur night
At the Apollo on November 21, 1934
Who, but Ella could lead a band at the
Savoy Ballroom after Chick Webb?
Who but Ella could improvise like a sax?
Scatting and bopping with more precision
Pyrotechnics, originality and speed than a
Bullet train in tunes like It don't mean a thing
(if it ain't got that swing!) or Flying' Home
With bandleading behemoths, like Armstrong
Dizzy, Basie and Ellington?
Imagine if Ella had danced instead of sung
As she'd planned that night at the Apollo?
We might've never heard A Tiskit, A-Tasket
Or The Great American Songbook the way
She enshrined those lyrics body and soul
Ella, who scatted through Jim Crow
And motherless days of childhood
Ella, who, like Hafiz, never told all her
Secrets or left detailed maps of her
Loves behind but just let them pour
Through the conflux of many streams
That flowed through the clear light of
Her God-given voice!

Genny Lim
© 2021 Genny Lim

Hoisan-wa for Faith Ringgold

Thlin Sim Ling Gim

Thlin Sim Ling Gim

Faith Ringgold

Hoisan-wa for Black woman

Black woman artist rebel mother

friend sister

With dark eyes of light

With yellow gold

Of heart, her sheen and breath,

flying, brushing skin, sculpting

dreams horizons

On earth, materializing resistance

Thlin Sim Ling Gim

Thlin Sim Ling Gim

In Hoisan-wa, our ancestral

dialect, a translation of your name,

Faith Ringgold, is "Believe in heart; Make gold."

Your gilded truth as an artist/activist

trumpet blackness of light, sorrow of suffering

Cassie Lightfoot dares to dream,

Cassie Lightfoot dares to fly above Tar Beach

Pluck stars from Milky Way, Cassie

Soar, Cassie, Soar!

Soar while oppressed

Soar while suppressed

Thlin Sim Ling Gim

Thlin Sim Ling Gim

To have Faith

One must walk into the Valley of Death

And not look back

To have Faith

One must shed the shackles of the past

Like a snake shedding skin

Knowing the body is a crucible for change

To have Faith

One must rule from the heart

And reach for the horizon

Where fire meets water

In that still but floating dance

Of churning alchemy

Where dreams take flight

The Last Hoisan Poets

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"Thlin Sim Ling Gim," Faith Ringgold, at home. October 14, 2022. Photograph by Nellie Wong.



The Last Hoisan Poets: Genny Lim, Flo Oy Wong, and Nellie Wong. Photo: Andi Wong

THE LAST HOISAN POETS — Genny Lim, Nellie Wong, and Flo Oy Wong — trace their roots to China's Hoisan villages, home of the Hoisan-wa (a.k.a. Toisanese/Taishanese) Chinese dialect. They conduct special poetry readings in English and Hoisan-wa, to pay homage to their mother language which is at risk of fading from collective memory.

<https://thelasthoisanpoets.ddns.net/>

Genny Lim is the recipient of two lifetime achievement literary awards from PEN Oakland and the city of Berkeley. She has also served as San Francisco Jazz Poet Laureate and former SF Arts Commissioner. Lim's award-winning play, *Paper Angels*, the first Asian American play to air on PBS's *American Playhouse* in 1985, has been performed throughout the U.S., Canada and China. She is author of five poetry collections, *Winter Place*, *Child of War*, *Paper Gods and Rebels*, *KRAI*, *La Morte Del Tempo*, and co-author, with the late Him Mark Lai and Judy Yung, of *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island*, winner of the American Book Award in 1980. Lim has worked with past Jazz legends, such as Max Roach and long-time collaborators, Jon Jang, John Santos, Francis Wong and Anthony Brown. She is a member of *The Last Hoisan Poets*, who recently collaborated with Del Sol Quartet in the *United States of Asian America Festival 2022*.

Flo Oy Wong, co-founder of the San Francisco-based Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA), is an artist/poet/educator. A recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awards, she was a visiting artist at various colleges and universities. Articles about her art are published in multiple publications. Growing up in Oakland Chinatown, she spoke her family's ancestral dialect, Hoisan-wa. In 2018, Flo published her art and poetry book, *Dreaming of Glistening Pomeles* (Amazon), inspired by her childhood. Contemporary Asian Theater Scene (CATS) presented Flo with their 2022 Image Hero Award. Now, a member of *The Last Hoisan Poets*, she frequently reads with sister poets Genny Lim and Nellie Wong.

Nellie Wong has published four books: *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park*, *The Death of Long Steam Lady*, *Stolen Moments* and *Breakfast Lunch Dinner*. Her poems and essays appear in numerous journals and anthologies, including *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, the foundational text of women of color feminism edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Among her many recognitions, excerpts from two poems have been permanently installed at public sites at the San Francisco Municipal Railway and a building at Oakland High School is named after her. She's co-featured in the documentary film, *Mitsuye and Nellie Asian American Poets*. A poem of hers was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She's traveled to China in the First American Women Writers Tour with Alice Walker, Tillie Olsen and Paule Marshall, among others. She's taught poetry writing at Mills College and in Women Studies at the University of Minnesota. Nellie is the recipient of the 2022 PEN Oakland/Reginald Lockett Lifetime Achievement Award.



Photo: Christopher Michel

Tongo Eisen-Martin is a poet, movement worker, and educator originally from San Francisco. His latest curriculum on extrajudicial killing of Black people, *We Charge Genocide Again*, has been used as an educational and organizing tool throughout the country. His book, *Someone's Dead Already*, was nominated for a California Bookstore Award. His book *Heaven Is All Goodbyes*, published by the City Lights Pocket Poets series, was shortlisted for the Griffins Poetry Prize and won a California Book Award and an American Book Award. His latest book *Blood On The Fog* was released this fall in the City Lights Pocket Poets series and named one of the New York Times poetry books of the year. In 2020, he co-founded Black Freight Press to publish revolutionary works. He is San Francisco's eighth poet laureate. <https://www.blackfreightpress.com/>



Photo: Lux Photography

Tshaka Campbell is the current Santa Clara County Poet Laureate and has authored three books entitled *TARMAN*, *MUTED WHISPERS* and *TUNNEL VISION* with one more on the way entitled *LETTERS TO MY DAUGHTER*. He has 3 albums entitled *ONE* and *BLOODLINES*; his most recent release *SKIN vol.1* is currently available for download on iTunes, bandcamp and various other digital stores. Tshaka has collaborated on a number of musical projects in the House, Jazz and Blues genres as well as national commercials. He currently resides in California and continues to ask the world to "Listen Different!". Tshakacampbellpoet.com



Destiny Muhammad is a recording and performing artist, band leader, composer, and producer. Her genre, Celtic to Coltrane, is cool and eclectic with a mix of jazz and storytelling.

Destiny has curated concerts for the Grace Cathedral Christmas Concert Series and SFJAZZ Tribute to Jazz Harp Legend Alice Coltrane. She has shared the stage with Jazz Masters Denise Perrier, Omar Sosa,

and Blue Note Artist Ambrose Akisemuire. She has headlined the Healdsburg Jazz Festival and Butchertown Jazz Fest and is the Healdsburg Jazz Festival 2022 Artist in Residence.

Destiny is Governor Emeritus and Educational Chair Emeritus of the Recording Academy, American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers Songwriter Awardee, SFJAZZ Teaching Artist, Bay Area Jazz and Blues Award Winner, and a California Arts Council Legacy Fellow.

destinymuhammad.net

Writing Workshop with The Last Hoisan Poets

Saturday, November 19, 3pm - 4:30pm, in the Kimball Education Gallery

After the performance, writers of all ages and skill levels are invited to [a poetry workshop with The Last Hoisan Poets](#). Learn how to write an "American Sentence," inspired by the 13th-century Japanese poetic form called the haiku. *Thlin Sim Ling Gim* is the Hoisan-wa name given to Ringgold by the poets, meaning "Believe in heart, make gold." Come write with The Last Hoisan Poets and express your appreciation for Faith Ringgold - an American Treasure!